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To:

Instructional Quality Commission  
Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division (CFIRD)  
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Re: History–Social Science Framework for California Public Schools

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission,

We write as a group of scholars whose work is focused on the issues of caste in South Asian Studies. We come to this work as Dalit, Bahujan and Adivasi scholars who represent communities formerly known as ‘untouchable’, ‘lower caste’, and ‘tribal’ throughout South Asia.

Collectively we are a widely-published group of scholars who have lectured at various universities across the United States, Canada, and India including University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Los Angeles, University of California, Santa Cruz, San Francisco State University, University of Southern California, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, Brandeis University, New York University, Princeton Seminary and Columbia University. Many of us have published in the most respected journals, presented in academic conferences throughout the United States, Canada, India and Europe, alongside a diversity of non-academic spaces including the San Francisco Women’s Building, Parliament of World Religions, the World Social Forum, Lincoln Center, Allied Media Conference, Women in Media and more.

Our areas of expertise explore the intersections of caste, marginality, social segregation, race, gender, sexuality, and indigeneity. As such, we write to you with concern, specifically in regards to content regarding the nature of the caste system with respect to the California History-Social Science Framework. Proposed edits by the significantly funded Hindu American Foundation (HAF) and California Parents for the Equalization of Educational Materials (CPEEM) recurrently convey to students the invalid assumption that caste should be recognized as just another form of social stratification, similar to class distinctions in most other societies -- an assumption which has been shown to be incorrect and invalid based on multiple sociological, historical, and anthropological studies (Please see myriad references below). In fact, the system of caste, understood through the categories of ‘*varna*’ and ‘*jati*’ is unmistakably distinct to the Indian subcontinent. Despite the fact that ‘untouchability’ is officially outlawed by the constitution of modern India, hundreds of millions are systematically subjected to perpetual violence and



A.The Issue of the emergence of Jatis	
<b>Re:</b> Comment #2502 Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) <b>Commenter:</b> South Asian Faculty Group	Page 214, lines 866-867:
<b>Current text:</b> “Ancient Indian society formed into self-governing groups, jatis, that emphasized birth as the defining criteria.”	<b>South Asian Faculty Group suggested change:</b> “Ancient Indian society formed into groups, jatis, that emphasized birth as the defining criteria.”
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group:</b> We agree with this change and would add the following language:  <p>“In ancient times, various societies living in the area now known as South Asia were organized into jatis. <u>Sacred texts legitimized birth as the defining criteria for each jati.</u>”</p>	

We recommend this language because “self-governing” implies a voluntary organization of peoples into *jatis* based on their own free will. However, there is consensus amongst historians, that a society divided into caste groups based on birth, with wide and prejudicial differences in rights and responsibilities, was advocated as the ideal in texts as old as the *Rig Veda*. *Jatis* are a consequence of this religious sanction and remain a deeply rooted religious belief.

We suggest using the term “South Asia” or an older term “subcontinent,” instead of “India,” to not only differentiate it from political constructs of India under the British Empire and modern India post-1947, but even more significantly to underline the fact that “the subcontinent as we know it today *never formed a single political or cultural unit in premodern times*. For much the longest stretches of its history, its lands were divided between a varying assortment of middle-sized kingdoms of different stripes. Of the three larger empires it witnessed, none covered the territory of Nehru’s *Discovery of India*. Maurya and Mughal control extended to contemporary Afghanistan, ceased much below the Deccan, and never came near Manipur. The area of Gupta control was considerably less. Separated by intervals of five hundred and a thousand years, there was no remembered political or ideological connection between these realms, or even common religious affiliation: at its height the first of them Buddhist, the second Hindu [upper caste], the third Muslim. Beneath a changing mosaic of mostly regional rulers, there was more continuity of cultural and social patterns, *caste – the best claimant to a cultural demarcation – being attested very early*, but no uniformity. *The ‘idea of India’ was a European not a local invention, as the name itself makes clear. No such term, or equivalent, as ‘India’ existed in any indigenous language.* A Greek coinage, taken from the Indus river, it was so foreign to the subcontinent that as late as the 16th century, Europeans could define Indians



B. The Issue of Varna	
Re; Comment #2511 Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) <b>Commenter:</b> South Asian Faculty Group	Page 214, lines 872-874:
<b>Current text:</b> “A person belonged to a particular varna by his professional excellence and his good conduct, not by birth itself.”	<b>South Asian Faculty Group change:</b> “A person belonged to a particular varna not just by his professional excellence and his good conduct, but mainly by birth.
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group Recommendation:</b>  “A person belonged to a particular varna mainly by birth, and only very rarely via professional excellence and good conduct.”	

We suggest this language here because the defining feature of caste is its inevitable heritability and immobility. The exceptional cases where a person was “promoted” to a “higher” caste were far and few between, and prove the rule rather than the contrary. Caste is much more complex than just an occupational position. It is predetermined at birth. In addition, attempts to deviate from one’s caste location are considered severely punishable offenses, thus demonstrating immobility. We cite verses from scriptures to support our claim below:

*But a Shudra, whether bought or not bought (by the Brahmin) may be compelled to practise servitude, for that Shudra was created by the self-existent merely for the service of the Brahmin. Even if freed by his master, the Shudra is not released from servitude; for this (servitude) is innate in him; who then can take it from him.<sup>12</sup>*

*Let a Brahmin's title imply prosperity, a Kshatriya's safeguard, a Vaishya's wealth, a Shudra's service.<sup>13</sup>*

*If a man of one-birth (low-caste) assault one of the twice-born castes with virulent words, he ought to have his tongue cut, for he is of the lowest origin. If he makes mention in an insulting manner of their name and caste, a red-hot iron rod, ten fingers long, should be thrust into his mouth. If this man through insolence gives instruction to the priests in regard to their duty, the king should cause boiling hot oil to be poured into his mouth and ear.<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> Manusmriti, 2 Chapter VIII, Verses 412-414.

<sup>13</sup> Manusmriti, 2 Chapter II, Verses 31-32.

<sup>14</sup> Manusmriti, 3 Chapter VIII, Verses 270-72.



C. The issue of social stability and caste	
Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) Page 214, lines 870-1	Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) Page 214, lines 870-1
<b>Current Text:</b> “This system, often termed caste, provided social stability and gave an identity to each community.”	
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group Recommendation:</b>  “This system, which is known as caste, created deep inequalities within the South Asian societies, with castes at the top enjoying many more freedoms and privileges <i>written into the law</i> than those at the bottom. The latter were invariably assigned undesirable jobs, paid less or nothing, their labor exploited. The eminently unjust system was maintained via violence, threats of violence, and excommunication.”	

We suggest these changes because in societies divided so rigidly, with rights denied to so many, social stability could only be the perspective of hegemonic and ruling castes. In contrast, the existence of voluminous instructions in scriptures on how to crush lower-caste assertion is evidence that *stability was enforced on the majority of the people with a heavy hand*. We cite here below:

*A Brahmana shall salute stretching forward his right arm on a level with his ear, a Kshatriya holding it on a level with the breast, a Vaishya holding it on a level with the waist, a Shudra holding it low (and) stretching forward the joined hands.*<sup>15</sup>

*A Kshatriya (shall be fined) one hundred (Karshapanas) if he abuses a Brahmana.*

*In case of an assault (on a Brahmana) twice as much.*

*A Vaishya (who abuses a Brahmana, shall pay) one and a half (times as much as a Kshatriya).*

*But a Brahmana (who abuses) a Kshatriya (shall pay) fifty (Karshapanas). One half of that amount (if he abuses) a Vaishya. And if he abuses a Shudra nothing.*<sup>16</sup>

*A Brahmin may take possession of the goods of a Shudra with perfect peace of mind, for, since nothing at all belongs to this Shudra as his own, he is one whose property may be taken away by his master.*<sup>17</sup>

*If (the Shudra) has criminal intercourse with an Aryan woman, his organ shall be cut off and all his property be confiscated.*

<sup>15</sup> Apastamba Dharma Sutra 1, Prasna 1, Patala 2, Khanda 5, Sutra 16.

<sup>16</sup> Gautama Dharma Sutra, 1 Chapter XII, Sutras 8-13

<sup>17</sup> Manusmriti, Chapter VIII, Verse 417



simply as 'the natives of all unknown countries' and use it to describe the inhabitants of the Americas." <sup>4</sup>

This concept of the newness of the political 'idea of India' is crucial to understand, and no less important and as accurate as the concept of 'European Union' as a new idea.

Apropos sacred texts legitimizing birth as the defining criteria for each *jati*, several primary sources from the same can be cited.<sup>5</sup> In the interest of brevity only five are cited here:

*When (the gods) divided Purusha, into how many parts did they cut him up? What was his mouth? What arms (had he)? What (two objects) are said (to have been) his thighs and feet? The Brahmana was his mouth, the Rajanya was made his arms; the being called the Vaishya, he was his thighs; the Shudra sprang from his feet.*<sup>6</sup>

*There are four castes—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Among these, each preceding (caste) is superior by birth to the one following.*<sup>7</sup>

*For the prosperity of the worlds, he (the creator) from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet created the Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.*<sup>8</sup>

*There are four castes (Varna) Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Three castes, Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas (are called) twice-born.* <sup>9</sup>

*'The Brahmana was his mouth, the Kshatriya formed his arms: the Vaishya his thighs; the Shudra was born from his feet.' It has been declared in the following passage of the Veda that a Shudra shall not receive the sacraments. 'He created the Brahmana with the Gayatri (metre), the Kshatriya with the Trishtubh, the Vaishya with the Jagati, the Shudra without any metre.'*<sup>10</sup>

*For a Brahmin abusing a Kshatriya, the fine shall be half of a hundred (fifty) Panas; for abusing a Vaishya, half of fifty (twenty-five) Panas, for abusing a Shudra twelve and a half. This punishment has been declared for abusing a virtuous Shudra (i.e., a Shudra who accepts his low status and does willingly the duties attached to that status) who has committed no wrong; no offence is imputable to a Brahmin for abusing a Shudra devoid of virtue. A Vaishya shall be fined a hundred (Panas) for reviling a Kshatriya; a Kshatriya reviling a Vaishya shall have to pay half of that amount as a fine. In the case of a Kshatriya reviling a Shudra the fine shall be twenty Panas; in the case of a Vaishya, the double amount is declared to be the proper fine by persons learned in law. A Shudra shall be compelled to pay the first fine for abusing a Vaishya; the middling fine for abusing a Kshatriya; and the highest fine for abusing a Brahmin.*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Perry Anderson. *The Indian Ideology*. Three Essays Collective, 2012. (Emphasis added)

<sup>5</sup> Translations of Sanskrit verses cited from Hindu scriptures in this document come from Max Müller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol I - L, Oxford University Press, 1879-1910 and John Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and Progress of the Religion and Institutions of India*, Williams and Norgate, 1861

<sup>6</sup> *Rig Veda*, Hymn 10.90, Verses 11-12

<sup>7</sup> *Apastamba Dharma Sutra*, 1 Prasna I, Patala I, Khanda I, Sutras 4-5

<sup>8</sup> *Manusmriti*, 1 Chapter I, Verse 31

<sup>9</sup> *Vasishtha Dharma Sutra*, 3 Chapter II, Verses 1-4

<sup>10</sup> *Vasishtha Dharma Sutra*, 4 Chapter IV, Verse 3

<sup>11</sup> *Brihaspati Dharma Shastra*, 2 Chapter XX, Verses 7-11.



unrelenting servitude to this day. In addition, untouchability remains only one fraction of the behemoth of oppression that is caste.

So while all South Asia specialists would agree that all representations of history, culture, and religions must, of course, be accurate and properly contextualized, first and foremost, what is pointed out as “offensive” with respect to debates on cultural sensitivity is highly arguable. Conditions that promote hostility and intolerance towards any faith or culture must be interrupted, but we argue here, that sanitizing history of correct but unpalatable facts regarding systemic *and ongoing* forms of discrimination and exploitation, such as the caste system in South Asia, wittingly or unwittingly, only perpetuates hostility and injustice, rather than interrupting the same. After all, history is not written to alleviate painful feelings; it is written so we might learn from its mistakes, and very crucially: *mistakes that are yet to be appropriately addressed at the structural societal level.*

The intrusion into the framework review by those without scholarly or academic credentials in the study of India, South Asia, and Dalit history in particular, has the potential to reproduce the very violence of cultural insensitivity that such textbooks, via accurate and contextualized histories, aim to interrupt. There is no reasonable justification for the continued exclusion and erasure of Dalit, Bahujan, and Adivasi histories in South Asia, and that of their rich contributions to California, U.S., South Asia and the world at large. The Dalit-American contribution to California history extends as far back as the Indian independence activist, Mangu Ram Muggowal, who was one of the leaders of the revolutionary Ghadar Party, founded and headquartered in San Francisco in 1913.<sup>1</sup> Similar liberation movements continue today with historical struggles against caste apartheid and caste-based sexual violence in India and amongst diasporic communities in the U.S.<sup>2,3</sup>

In light of this, we find it incumbent upon us, to not only endorse the comments and suggested edits from the South Asia Faculty Group, but to also contribute a few of our own comments to areas of critical concern. Where possible we included original text and suggested replacement text for easy reference. In some cases, we are simply endorsing the decisions of the History Social Science Review HSSR board while also offering additional supporting context, and at other times we have proposed additional language informed by the historical record and current accepted scholarship.

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<sup>1</sup> Sanjay Paswan, Pramanshi Jaideva, *Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India: Leaders*, Gyan Publishing House, 2002

<sup>2</sup> Manan Desai, “What B.R. Ambedkar Wrote to W.E.B. Du Bois”, South Asian American Digital Archive, 22 April, 2014

<sup>3</sup> Amanda Holpuch. “The Dalit-American transmedia artist turns a critical lens on the intersection of caste discrimination and sexual violence in India” The Guardian, 12 March, 2015.



*If (the woman had) a protector (i.e., she was under the guardianship of some person) he (the Shudra) shall be executed after having undergone the punishments prescribed above.<sup>18</sup>*

*A once-born man (or Shudra) who insults members of a twice-born caste with gross invectives, shall have his tongue cut off; for he is of low origin.*

*If he refers to their name or caste in terms indicating contempt, an iron-rod, ten angulas long, shall be thrust red-hot into his mouth.*

*If he is insolent enough to give lessons regarding their duty to Brahmins, the king shall order hot oil to be poured into his mouth and ears.*

*With whatever limb a man of low caste offends against a Brahmin, that very limb of him shall be cut off, such shall be the atonement for his crime.*

*A low-born man, who tries to place himself on the same seat with his superior in caste, shall be branded on his hip and banished, or (the king) shall cause his backside to be gashed.*

*If through arrogance he spits on a superior, the king shall cause both his lips to be cut off; if he makes water on him, the penis; if he breaks wind against him, the buttocks.<sup>19</sup>*

Modern day India continues to be plagued by these divisions. *The Socio-economic Caste Census of 2011*<sup>20</sup> confirms the existence of thousands of castes and even more sub-castes in present day. We argue that this level of dismemberment of society onto a scale of graded inequality is, in reality, the reason for thousands of years of injustice and consequent social instability that continues into modernity.

<b>D. The issue of the emergence of Untouchability</b>	
Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) Page 214, lines 874-876:	
<b>Current text:</b> “In addition, by 500 CE or earlier, there existed certain communities outside the jati system, the “Untouchables,” who did the most unclean work, such as cremation, disposal of dead animals, and sanitation.”	
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group Recommendation:</b>  “In addition, by 500 CE or earlier, there existed certain communities outside the jati system, the so-called ‘Untouchables,’ who were forced to do the most ‘unclean’ work, such as cremation, disposal of dead animals, and sanitation. The term ‘Untouchable’ is now seen as derogatory and the term Dalit or Scheduled Caste is preferred.”	

<sup>18</sup>Gautama Dharma Sutra, 6 Chapter VIII, Verse 366.

<sup>19</sup>Narada Smriti, 2 Chapter XV, Verses 22-27.

<sup>20</sup> <http://secc.gov.in/welcome>



We suggest this language because current content does not make clear that *Dalits did not do ‘unclean’ work out of their own free will*. In fact, they were forced to perform degrading work considered unclean by others. Moreover, the usage of the derogatory term “Untouchable” is outdated and offensive. Present terms that are signifiers of resistance of these communities must be included. We cite below evidence regarding the treatment and naming of Dalits.

*The sages have distinguished five sorts of attendants according to law. Among these are four sorts of labourers; the slaves (Dalits) are the fifth category of which there are fifteen species.*<sup>21</sup>

*But the dwellings of the Chandalas and the Shivapakas (Dalits and Adivasis) shall be outside the village, they must be made Apapatras and their wealth (shall be) dogs and donkeys. Their dress (shall be) the garments of the dead, (they shall eat) their food from broken dishes, black iron (shall be) their ornaments and they must always wander from place to place. A man who fulfils a religious duty, shall not seek intercourse with them; Their food shall be given to them by others (than an Aryan giver) in a broken dish; at night they shall not walk about in village and in towns. By day they may go about for the purpose of their work, distinguished by marks at king's command, and they shall carry out the corpses (of persons) who have no relatives; that is a settled rule. By the King's order they shall always execute the criminals, in accordance with the law, and they shall take for themselves the clothes, the beds, and the ornaments of (such) criminals.*<sup>22</sup>

*The use of the Untouchable designations as derogatory forms the linguistic behaviour of other castes. As such bhangi, waghria, servia, (categories of the word “untouchable”) indicate very disparagingly the person to whom they are directed.*<sup>23</sup>

E. Return the usage of caste vs. class system.	
Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) Page 214, lines 878-881:	
<b>Current text:</b> “This class system became distinctive over the centuries for being especially complex and formal, involving numerous customs and prohibitions on eating together and intermarrying that kept social and occupational groups distinct from one another in daily life.”	
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group Recommendation:</b>  “The caste system of South Asian societies, with its specific rules about purity and pollution, became distinctive over the millennia for being especially complex, formal, and legalized,	

<sup>21</sup> Narada Smriti, Chapter V, Verse 1  
<sup>22</sup> Manusmriti, Chapter X, Verses 51-56  
<sup>23</sup> Rosa Maria Perez, *Kings and Untouchables: A Study of the Caste System in Western India*, Chronicle Books, 2004.



involving numerous customs and laws. These laws entail prohibitions on eating together and marrying within one's own castes, and that keeps caste groups separate from one another in daily life, with members of each caste looking down at those in the castes “below” with abhorrence and disgust.”

Our suggestions are tied to the fact that class and caste are two very different concepts. Class as opposed to caste, generally refers to an economic stratification that is not sanctioned by religion, maintains fluidity between groupings, is not restricted by endogamy, segregation or rules subscribed to for inter-dining and inter-marrying. In South Asian societies, economic fates *are often the result of* caste positions in both ancient and modern times, which is thus an overarching superstructure rather than class. The conflation of the term “Caste” with the term “Class” is misleading and erases the distinctiveness of the Caste system in South Asia. These terms are not used interchangeably in scholarly work either. We ask that you refer to any work on castes, including the canonical, *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*, B.R Ambedkar, *Indian Antiquary* Vol. XLI (1917).

F. Comparison to other divisions	
Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) Page 214, lines 882	
<b>Current Text:</b> “Over the Centuries the Indian social structure became more rigid though perhaps not more inflexible than the class divisions in other ancient civilizations.”	
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group Recommendation:</b> “Over the centuries the Indian social structure became more rigid in some ways and persists into the modern day.”	

**Suggested Text:**

We suggest that “perhaps not more inflexible than the class divisions in other ancient civilizations” be removed because South Asian caste system’s uniqueness in structure and praxis is not easily comparable to those of other ancient civilizations. We provide evidence for one line of reasoning below:

*Though the existence of classes is the de facto condition of every society, nevertheless no society has converted this de facto state of affairs into a de jure connotation of an ideal society. The scheme of the Purusha Sukta is the only instance in which the real is elevated to the dignity of an ideal.* <sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> B.R Ambedkar, *Who were the Shudras*, Thackers, 1947



G. Comparison of caste to slavery	
Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) Page 215, lines 887-892:	
<b>Current text:</b> “Caste, however, is a term that social scientists use to describe any particularly unbending social structure, for example, slave-holding society in the American south before the Civil War, which can make the “caste” label offensive. Today many Hindus, in India and in the United States, do not identify themselves as belonging to a caste. Teachers should make clear to students that this was a social and cultural structure rather than a religious belief.”	
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group Recommendation:</b>  “Caste is a term that social scientists use to describe any particularly unbending social structure that is defined on a graded unequal system. For example, slave-holding society in the American south before the Civil War. Today many South Asians in at home and in the diaspora, still identify themselves as belonging to a caste or into groupings coded by caste, and they practice casteism via interpersonal relations and professional networks, religious practices and deeply-inculcated stereotypes, politics and marriage. Teachers should make clear to students that this is a social and cultural structure that has embedded religious beliefs.”	

What was unique about this caste was the religious seal it placed on slavery. When the slave trade and slave system was abolished in India by the Slavery Abolition Act of 1843, a historian, estimated that there were 20 million outcastes slaves in India at that time. The state of Travancore alone had about 200,000 slaves.<sup>25</sup> Hindu scriptures discuss extensively the matters related to slave-holding including buying, selling and gifting slaves. Again, in the interest of conciseness, we will cite only three verses.

*This Anga, who was not defective in any respect had once said, “I give you O Brahman, 10,000 elephants and 10,000 slave girls, if you call me to this sacrifice.”*<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> D. H. George, *Kumari Maavatta Pennurimai Porattam*, Mani Pub., Madras, 1982.

<sup>26</sup> *Aitareya Brahman*, Kaand 8, Chapter 4



The Rishi Galav then searched another buyer for Madhavi (slave-girl) and this time it is king Divodas who gives 200 horses in the bargain. Then he takes her to King Ushinao and manages to strike a better bargain. He receives now 400 horses.<sup>27</sup>

The Manu Smriti classifies slaves into seven categories:

1. war captive
2. a self-volunteered slave
3. born of a female slave
4. a slave purchased
5. slave given by parents
6. inherited through will and
7. slave penalised by the king<sup>28</sup>

In the present day, India's lower castes continue to be vulnerable to modern day slavery. The 2014 *Global Slavery Report*, estimates that India has the highest number of individuals living in slavery out of any country worldwide. The report quotes, "India's modern slavery challenges are immense. Across India's population of over 1.2 billion people, all forms of modern slavery, including inter-generational bonded labor, trafficking for sexual exploitation, and forced marriage, exist. Evidence suggests that members of lower castes and tribes, religious minorities, and migrant workers are disproportionately affected by modern slavery."<sup>29</sup>

H. Representation of women and patriarchy	
Re: Comment 2544 Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) Page 215, lines 894-895: Commenter South Asia Faculty Group	
<b>Current text:</b> "Although ancient India was a patriarchy, women had a right to their personal wealth, especially jewelry, gold, and silver, but fewer property rights than men."	<b>South Asian Faculty Group Suggested change:</b> "Although ancient India was a patriarchy, women had a right to their personal wealth, especially jewelry, gold, and silver, but little property rights when compared to men, akin to the some other ancient kingdoms and societies."
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group Recommendation:</b>  We have added the qualifier "some" to signify that not all societies in the ancient and medieval eras denied inheritance of land and resources other than personal jewelry to women.	

<sup>27</sup> Mahabharatha, Udyog Parv, section 117-118

<sup>28</sup> Manusmriti ,Chapter 8, verse 415

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/>



We have added language here to support the suggestion of the South Asia Faculty Group. The new language makes more clear that property ownership was not always or easily, a right endowed to ancient women in South Asia. In addition, we must stress that lower-caste women definitively had no such rights and, as shown in the previous citations, were in fact commodified themselves.

*A wife, a son, and a slave, these three are declared to have no property ; the wealth which they earn is (acquired) for him to whom they belong.* <sup>30</sup>

A modern controversy that speaks to this complexity, was the dissent surrounding parts of the Hindu Code Bill, which proposed to give the widow, a son's share in property. This, amongst other rights proposed to be given to Hindu women, were fiercely contested by Hindu members of Parliament, laypersons and even Hindu women themselves, who worried that the acceptance of these new rights could violate their religious praxis.<sup>31</sup>

I. Representation of Women in Religious Ceremonies	
Re: Comment 2545 Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) Page 215, lines 896-897: Commenter South Asia Faculty Group	
<b>Current text:</b> “They participated equally with their husbands in religious ceremonies and festival celebrations.”	<b>South Asian Faculty Group Suggested change</b> “They participated in religious ceremonies and festival celebrations, though not as equals and often were misrepresented...”
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group Recommendation:</b>  Please keep these edits.	

Again, we stress that “women” as a term used in the context of Ancient South Asia, may be too broad to be meaningful. Many lower caste and marginalized women were complete outsiders.

<sup>30</sup> Manusmriti, Chapter VII.416  
<sup>31</sup> Rina Williams, *Postcolonial Politics and Personal Laws*, Oxford University Press, 2006 and Chitra Sinha, *Debating Patriarchy: The Hindu Code Bill Controversy in India (1941–1956)*, Oxford University Press, 2012.



J. Usage of the Ramayana	
Re: Comment 2549 Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) Page 215, starting on line 899: Commenter South Asia Faculty Group	
<b>Current text:</b> In this way, students can deepen their understanding of Hinduism as they are immersed in one of ancient India's most important literary and religious texts.	<b>South Asian Faculty Group Suggested change:</b> "Other versions of the Ramayana may include a more nuanced, critical evaluation of Rama's roles, and it may be helpful to introduce students to the different versions of the Ramayana."
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group Recommendation:</b>  Please keep these edits.	

Much of the struggle in the Ramayana is presented as a conflict between Rama and the "Asuras" like Ravana and his sister Shoorpanaka. Ancient texts cite in several places that *Asuras* were the ancestors of Shudras and other low caste and tribal groups. Students must be asked to examine the acts of violence against Shoorpanaka, for example, an *Asura* woman, who propositions Rama but is humiliated, teased and then violently mutilated as punishment.<sup>32</sup>

*The Brahmana caste is sprung from the gods; the Shudras from the Asuras.*<sup>33</sup>

K. Buddhism	
Re: Comment 2552 Chapter 10 ( Gr. 6) Page 215, lines 912-914: Commenter South Asia Faculty Group	
<b>Current text:</b> "Through the story of his life, his Hindu background, and his search for enlightenment, students may learn about his	<b>South Asian Faculty Group Suggested change:</b> "Through the story of his life, and his search for enlightenment, students may

<sup>32</sup> *Ramayana* 3.17. 1-5

<sup>33</sup> *Taittiriya Brahmana* 1 Muir, Vol. I, p. 21



fundamental ideas: suffering, compassion, and mindfulness.”	learn about his fundamental ideas: suffering, compassion, and mindfulness.”
<b>Dalit Bahujan Faculty Group Recommendation:</b>  Please keep these edits.	

We agree with the suggested change. As we have brought to your attention previously, Hinduism is a modern construct and at the time of the Buddha, such a religion did not exist. In addition, a reference to the Buddha’s “Hindu background” here is unnecessary and does not add meaningfully to the discussion of Buddhism which is a distinct and vibrant tradition that stands fully on its own.

Finally, we would like to submit that the theory of postcolonialism and the critique of Orientalism cannot ethically be used as an argument in the defence of ignoring caste and its entailed ignominies, in heterogeneous, unequal, and caste-ridden societies, as in South Asia. In fact, it is inarguably foundational to postcolonialism and the critique of Orientalism is Foucault’s groundbreaking analysis of Power and Knowledge, and any study of South Asian societies would be woefully incomplete without a thorough analysis of local and regional power within and in between the various groupings, which would inevitably lead to an analysis of the caste system.

A critique of British colonialism in South Asia, is but one layer of the required multi-layered analysis of power and knowledge in this context. The colonial census methodologies might have stratified various castes in specific ways, but the British neither wrote *Manusmriti* nor *Rig Veda* nor other key Brahmanic texts that justify, encourage, and legalize caste, nor did they enforce caste legalities for the many centuries preceding their rule. A small minority of “upper castes” has remained dominant in South Asia for millennia but they cannot, and should not, be allowed to represent nor subsume all of South Asian histories within their own powerful narratives eliding the histories of the majority of the people: the Dalits, Bahujans, Adivasis et al.

Moreover, as Braj Ranjan Mani, in his work *Debrahmanising History*<sup>34</sup>, critiques Said<sup>35</sup> by arguing that while Said would suggest to us that the colonials by describing, making statements about and producing knowledge of the colonized were actually engaging in a process of exerting domination and control an important aspect that Said does not account for is the role of the native elite in the process.

The corrective that Fanon brings to this is important. Fanon opines that “The national bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor in

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<sup>34</sup> Braj Ranjan Mani, *Debrahminising History*, Manohar, 2005

<sup>35</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, 1978



building, nor labour, it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and to be a part of the colonial racket."<sup>36</sup> The simplistic 'us versus them' logic of the dominant castes, using the rhetoric of colonialism and orientalism pseudo-innocently, is not only incorrect, but is in fact an obfuscation of the realities of the dynamics of power and knowledge production in ancient and modern South Asia.

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<sup>36</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York, 1963



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